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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 25 November 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Representative of the Secretary-General: Mr. MARTENSON

Chairman: Mr. ALSTON

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (E/C.12/1991/2)

1. Mr. MARTENSON (Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights), representative of the Secretary-General, declared open the sixth session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and congratulated all those members who had been re-elected by the Economic and Social Council as well as Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan, Mrs. Ider and Mr. Badawi who had been elected to replace the three outgoing members.

2. In his report on the work of the Organization submitted to the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had reaffirmed, more forcefully than ever before, the close connection that existed between human rights and peace. The shift in public attitudes and the growing interest of the international community in universalizing a regime of human rights reflected a greater awareness of one of the requirements of peace. It was beyond question that human rights violations imperilled peace. While recognizing the existence of a gulf between human rights aspirations and reality, the Secretary-General had cautioned against belittling the positive results that had already been achieved, including the development of procedures for examining human rights problems and violations. The fact that concern for the respect of human rights had now become pervasive around the globe was due in great measure to the thought and work by the United Nations and by those who had taken inspiration from it.

3. The Secretary-General had noted further that the increasing poverty on the present world scene was undermining the cohesion of societies and States, destroying the base of human rights and damaging the environment. That was a major cause of instability, which had to be addressed with the same sense of urgency as political crises because no system of collective security would remain viable if no attempt was made to solve that problem. In that sense, the Committee, which was entrusted with monitoring the efforts of States parties to ensure the realization of the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family and to a continuous improvement of living conditions, had a direct role to play in promoting world peace and stability. The Secretary-General had also discussed the question of the relationship between human rights and national sovereignty, noting that the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States could no longer be regarded as a protective barrier behind which human rights could be massively or systematically violated with impunity.

4. Note should be taken of certain recent human rights-related developments: seven new States (Albania, Estonia, Grenada, Israel, Lithuania, Nepal and Zimbabwe) had ratified or acceded to the Covenant since the Committee's previous session, bringing the total number of ratifications or accessions to 104. That was an encouraging development on the eve of the twenty-first anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenants on Human Rights and it was to be hoped that that trend would continue and even accelerate. For its part, the Centre for Human Rights would give careful consideration to requests for assistance for the purpose of facilitating the ratification of the Covenants by new States.

5. Furthermore, the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights had held its first session at Geneva in September 1991. In the opening statement he had made in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference, he had indicated that the preparatory process of the Conference should serve to reaffirm forcefully, and to safeguard, the international standards established by the United Nations, including those set forth in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. That process should also serve to promote the universal application of those standards and to enhance the effectiveness of national and international efforts aimed at their full implementation. The first session of the Preparatory Committee had been devoted largely to procedural matters (A/CONF.157/PC/13). It had decided to propose to the General Assembly that the World Conference should be held in Berlin in 1993 for a period of two weeks and that the Preparatory Committee itself should hold three further sessions - two in 1992 and one in 1993. It had also contemplated requesting the Secretary-General to draw up a few short analytical studies and to prepare or update the main reference documents and publications. Furthermore, the Committee has reaffirmed that the chairmen of the treaty bodies or their representatives should take an active part in the work of the Preparatory Committee and the World Conference itself. He felt sure that Mr. Simma would have some observations to make on that first session of the Preparatory Committee which he had attended; any additional comments and suggestions from other members of the Committee would be welcome.

6. Turning to the activities of other bodies set up under international human rights instruments, he pointed out that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had decided at its fortieth session to designate six of its members to be responsible for following developments relating to the work of the other human rights treaty bodies as well as the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission and the European Parliament, and to inform the Committee thereon. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had also examined reports by 12 States parties which had been long overdue but had had to consider 11 of them in the absence of a representative of the State concerned. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, for its part, had held its first session in October 1991. It should be stressed that 101 States had already ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Committee had been able to settle a fair number of organizational matters, including the adoption of its rules of procedure as well as guidelines for the presentation of the initial reports of States parties. For its part, the Centre for Human Rights had recently organized, or helped to organize, within the framework of its advisory services and technical assistance activities, several workshops or training courses, in particular a workshop on human rights instruments and reporting obligations, which had been held in Moscow at the end of August 1991 immediately after the attempted putsch and had served as a timely demonstration of the international community's desire to promote democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Soviet Union; a meeting on national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights had been held a few weeks before in Paris; a training course had been held in Mongolia; and a large workshop intended for African judges had been organized with the support of the Egyptian Government.

7. He went on to inform the Committee of the action taken in response to the requests made by the Committee at its fifth session. In particular, a brochure describing the work of the Committee would appear in a few days' time

as No. 16 in the "Fact Sheet" series. The brochure had been translated into six languages and would have a worldwide distribution. Moreover, the Committee had suggested holding meetings with members of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. That suggestion had been accepted by all the committees concerned. As for the suggestion to establish a "committee resource room", the Centre for Human Rights was exploring the possibility of setting up a reading room containing documentation relating to human rights and hoped to be in a position to do so by 1992. In addition, arrangements had been made to make available to the various United Nations information centres copies of all State reports under the various human rights instruments as well as the relevant summary records on their consideration and other appropriate United Nations documents.

8. Lastly, he invited the members who had been elected or re-elected to the Committee to make the solemn declaration required under rule 13 of the Committee's rules of procedure.

9. Mr. ALSTON, Mr. BADAWI, Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN, Mrs. IDER, Mr. KOUZNETSOV, Mr. MUTERAHEJURU, Mr. SIMMA and Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO solemnly undertook to discharge their duties as members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights impartially and conscientiously.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (item 2 of the provisional agenda) (E/C.12/1991/2)

10. Mr. KOUZNETSOV nominated Mr. Alston for the office of Chairman.

11. Mr. Alston was elected Chairman by acclamation.

12. Mr. Alston took the Chair.

13. The CHAIRMAN thanked the members of the Committee for electing him. He called for nominations for the offices of three Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur.

14. Mr. KONATE nominated Mr. Muterahejuru for the office of Vice-Chairman.

15. Mr. ALVAREZ VITA nominated Mr. Rattray for the office of Vice-Chairman.

16. Mr. Muterahejuru and Mr. Rattray were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

17. The CHAIRMAN, supported by Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN, suggested that the Committee should await the arrival of Mr. Sparsis before proceeding to elect the third Vice-Chairman.

18. Mr. KOUZNETSOV nominated Mr. Mratchkov for the office of Rapporteur.

19. Mr. Mratchkov was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 3 of the provisional agenda) (E/C.12/1991/2)

20. Mr. MRATCHKOV expressed surprise at the absence from the provisional agenda of any provision for the examination of additional information submitted by States parties whose reports had already been considered by the Committee.

21. The CHAIRMAN said he believed that that question was covered by item 7 and that it should be examined under subparagraph (a), "Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant". The moment when the Committee would deal with that question, however, remained to be determined.

22. Mr. FOFANA pointed out that the Committee's draft programme of work (E/C.12/1991/L.1) contained no indication concerning the examination of item 9.

23. The CHAIRMAN explained that that was a mistake. The draft programme of work would be amended when the Committee took up the item on organization of work.

24. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (agenda item 4) (E/C.12/1991/L.1)

25. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to a number of amendments to be made to the draft programme of work in document E/C.12/1991/L.1. First, since the preparation of the draft, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic had become the Republic of Belarus, so that the appropriate change had to be made in the heading for the meetings scheduled for 5 and 6 December 1991. Secondly, the Secretariat had received a letter from the Permanent Representative of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic requesting the Committee to agree to postpone consideration of the report of that State party in view of the fundamental changes currently taking place in the country. He expressed the hope that the Committee would be able to examine the report in question at its next session and suggested - and that was his third point - that the Committee should take up in its place the additional information submitted by five States parties in the order in which it had been received - Zaire, France, the Netherlands, Colombia and Jamaica. Fourthly, the consideration of agenda item 5, scheduled for 9 December, would no doubt be very brief, because the Committee had decided a long time previously to devote most of that day to item 8, namely to a general discussion on the topic of social and economic indicators. Fifthly, regarding the programme of meetings for 10 December, it was proposed, in addition to the celebration of the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to examine agenda item 9 ("Preparatory activities relating to the World Conference on Human Rights") and to deal with the formulation of suggestions and recommendations of a general nature based on the consideration of reports, a question which was the subject-matter of item 10 and not of item 8 as wrongly indicated in the draft programme of work. Finally, the report of the Committee to the Economic and Social Council was the subject of item 11 and not of item 10. The appropriate corrections should be made to the draft programme of work.

26. Mr. NENEMAN asked whether all States parties whose reports were due to be considered at the current session had confirmed to the Secretariat their intention to be represented in the discussions concerning them and whether the Committee would really be able to examine all the reports mentioned in its programme.

27. The CHAIRMAN explained that, apart from the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, none of the States parties concerned had so far desisted. He believed that was perhaps the result of the firm stand taken by the Committee at its fifth session to the effect that once a date was set for the consideration of a report, only force majeure could justify postponement. The Committee's programme of work at the current session was accordingly a very heavy one.

28. Mr. RATTRAY recalled the Committee's decision on the attitude to be adopted with regard to States parties that were not present during the consideration of their reports. Did the Committee intend to follow the same rules with regard to States which had supplied additional information? He seemed to recollect that the Committee had decided to leave the States parties concerned completely free in the matter.

29. The CHAIRMAN indicated that, when the Committee had dealt at its fifth session with the procedure to be followed in examining additional information, it had felt that it was useful for the State party concerned to be informed accordingly so as to afford it the opportunity to attend (E/C.12/1990/8, paras. 274-277). The reason for adopting that flexible solution was that no international instrument obliged States parties to send representatives to participate in the examination of their reports by the monitoring bodies. The practice of inviting them to do so, initiated some 20 years previously by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, now appeared to be an established one, but nevertheless the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights could not insist on States parties conforming to it. In any case, the Secretariat had sent notes verbales to the five States parties which had submitted additional information so as to give them due notice of the date on which the Committee intended to examine the supplementary information submitted.

30. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee agreed to postpone to its seventh session the consideration of the second periodic report of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic concerning the rights covered by articles 13 to 15 (E/1990/7/Add.6) and that it accepted the other amendments which he had suggested to the draft programme of work.

31. It was so decided.

32. The draft programme of work (E/C.12/1991/L.1), as amended, was adopted.

33. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, instead of examining the additional information in the order in which it had been received, the Committee should deal with the document submitted by Colombia at the same time as the second periodic report of that State party concerning the rights covered by articles 13 to 15. Moreover, the Secretariat had received from Jordan

additional information concerning the initial report of that State, covering the rights dealt with in articles 13 to 15, and that supplementary information would be submitted to the Committee's consideration at its seventh session.

34. The Committee had received a letter dated 12 May 1991 from the former ILO coordinator for human rights issues who, on his retirement, had thanked the Committee for its courteous attention to the representatives of ILO who had participated in its work and recommended his successor, Mr. Swepston, to the Committee's kind consideration. The Committee, which at the outset had actually been somewhat reluctant to accept the participation of representatives of specialized agencies in its work, had come to welcome their cooperation and certainly intended to continue to maintain constructive relations with ILO through Mr. Swepston. He also welcomed the new representative of WHO who had come to attend the meetings of the Committee.

35. The CHAIRMAN invited Mr. Mratchkov to report on the work of the pre-sessional working group.

36. Mr. MRATCHKOV, speaking as Chairman/Rapporteur of the Working Group entrusted with the preparation of the sixth session of the Committee, a group which apart from himself had included Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño, Mr. Muterahejuru, Mr. Sparsis and Mr. Alvarez Vita, said that the members of the Group had shared among themselves the tasks outstanding after the fifth session of the Committee and had met in Geneva from 16 to 20 September 1991 in the absence of Mr. Alvarez Vita, who had been kept in his home city. The Group had prepared or updated the lists of issues concerning the reports submitted in conformity with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant by 10 States parties, namely Afghanistan, Panama, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Syrian Arab Republic, Finland, Sweden, Spain, Colombia, the Republic of Belarus and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. The lists, as adopted by the Group, had been sent to the Governments of the countries concerned in early October and had also been distributed to the other members of the Committee. The Group had furthermore formulated observations on the additional information submitted by five States parties, namely Zaire, France, the Netherlands, Colombia and Jamaica. Since that was an important first occasion both for the Working Group and for the Committee itself, the Group had thought it advisable to submit its observations to the consideration of all the members of the Committee before communicating them to the States parties concerned.

37. Lastly, the Working Group drew the Committee's attention to a number of findings and suggestions. Firstly, the Group had observed that the degradation, and the precarious state, of the economic, social and cultural situation in a world which was undergoing profound changes because it had renounced ideological confrontation in order to embark resolutely on the path of democratization and international cooperation, required more than ever a strengthening of the international protection of economic, social and cultural rights. Secondly, the Group had observed that the States parties still departed all too often, both in the form and in the content of their reports, from the general guidelines adopted in that respect by the Committee. Thirdly, in the view of the Group it was highly desirable to strengthen the technical assistance supplied by the Centre for Human Rights to Governments for the preparation of reports: that assistance was all the more necessary in

that the Committee had revised in 1991 its general guidelines concerning the form and content of those reports, that the number of ratifications of the Covenant was increasing steadily and that the Covenant was one of the least known of the international instruments relating to the protection of human rights. Fourthly, considering that the reports submitted by States parties were piling up and that it was impossible for the Committee to examine them rapidly, it was desirable, and even necessary, to make provision in 1992 either for an additional session of the Committee or at least for an extension of one or two weeks for its seventh session.

38. The members of the Working Group had worked in a spirit of close cooperation and the Group wished to thank the members of the Secretariat for their valuable assistance.

39. The CHAIRMAN feared that the Committee's parent bodies would not take kindly to the idea of extending its sessions. A radical revision of the Committee's working methods would no doubt be necessary, considering that the States parties already numbered 104 - a number which was bound to increase - and that 18 reports, some of them going back to 1990, were awaiting examination but could only be considered in 1992.

40. Mr. SIMMA drew the Committee's attention to the great interest of the work of Mr. Danilo Türk, Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, on the economic and social indicators for evaluating the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur, who was anxious to work in coordination with the Committee, had requested the holding, before the Committee's session, of a meeting to study those indicators.

41. With regard to the time allotted to the Committee for its work, instead of extending the duration of the annual session, it would be better to convene an additional session.

42. The CHAIRMAN said he felt that neither the Economic and Social Council nor the General Assembly would readily accept that suggestion; it would be preferable to contemplate other means of coping with the heavy workload of the Committee during informal meetings at which the experience of Mr. Badawi could be drawn upon.

43. Mr. SIMMA pointed out that the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, in his opening statement, had indicated that the Human Rights Committee had designated some sort of "liaison officers". It would not be a bad idea to follow that example and the Committee could organize informal consultations to decide on who to entrust with that assignment.

44. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the chairmen of the human rights treaty bodies had made a proposal to that effect and that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was the only one not to have followed it. It would be desirable to make up for that delay.

ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AT ITS FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF 1991; BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-SIXTH SESSION AND BY THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AT ITS FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION (agenda item 5)

45. The CHAIRMAN said he proposed to make a brief survey and to take stock of the position and of the tasks awaiting the Committee. He would begin by referring to the action taken, in particular, regarding the requests made by the Committee at its fifth session.

46. The Secretary-General was to publish an information brochure on the Committee and its a tivities. Mr. Martenson had announced that a Fact Sheet would be distributed, but that type of publication was not sufficiently informative; a much more detailed brochure should be envisaged, intended not only for Governments but also for the general public. The question could be examined in connection with agenda item 9 concerning the preparatory activities relating to the World Conference on Human Rights.

47. Furthermore, the Committee had already repeatedly requested the establishment of a "resource room" because its meeting room did not have enough space to store and distribute all the desired information in all the working languages; however, a mere reading room such as that proposed by Mr. Martenson would not meet the Committee's needs. He hoped that, by making clear its dissatisfaction, the Committee would finally make itself heard.

48. On the other hand, a number of requests by the Committee had been met: it would have available, duly assembled together, the reports of the States parties and the summary records of its discussions on those reports. Similarly, the Secretariat had assembled the documentation requested on each of the States parties whose reports were due; in addition, the Secretariat had duly constituted a file of documents on the factual developments in which the Committee was interested and had made available to it the summary records of the discussions of other United Nations bodies which were relevant to its work. Moreover, the Committee would shortly have before it, in accordance with its request, a draft text of general comments on paragraphs 2 and 3 of article 2 of the Covenant and would be able to examine it at the current session, as envisaged. As for the discussion on the indicators, due to take place on 9 December, it was to be hoped that a number of specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations would be able to participate. Lastly, the Committee would have before it analytical notes on the problems of the elderly viewed from the standpoint of economic, social and cultural rights and on the question of the drafting of an optional protocol relating to the Covenant, and it should be able to find the time to consider them.

49. Turning to developments of interest to the Committee, he pointed out that the newly established Committee on the Rights of the Child had adopted practically all the working methods of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. He recalled also that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had requested the Economic and Social Council to adopt a decision whereby any country whose initial report more than 10 years overdue would be specifically named. The Council had not hesitated to adopt that draft decision. It was perhaps not a coincidence that the two countries which

were due to have been named had actually sent their initial reports before the adoption of the draft decision and thereby avoided being named in the final text of the decision. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, for its part, had decided to continue the consideration of the implementation of the Convention by those States parties that were extremely late in the submission of their reports: in the case of countries which had already submitted at least one report but were well overdue with a later report, the situation would be re-examined on the basis of the single report at the disposal of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. That initiative was an important one and provided an example worth reflecting upon. There was no doubt that if States parties could believe that they could avoid submitting any report at all or be over 10 years late, the fundamental obligations of the Covenant and hence the whole work of the Committee would become meaningless.

50. Some other developments should be mentioned, in particular proposals emanating from international bodies dealing not with human rights as such but with development, for example the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or the World Bank. The importance of the observance of human rights in the development process was now being stressed by many organizations. The meeting of French-speaking countries held in Paris in 1990 and the recent meeting of the Commonwealth countries at Harare, as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which coordinated the activities of the main donor countries, were unanimous in underlining the need to respect human rights.

51. That concept often took a concrete form in those bodies, namely that of the validity of the system of government, as attested by democratic elections organized at regular intervals, the transparency of the financial management by the public authorities, the independence of the judiciary and the primacy of the rule of law. In the narrow sense, a good system of government was a system which would satisfy a conservative economist and therefore be marked by the efficient management of the public sector, the avoidance of all forms of corruption, the observance of the rule of law in economic matters (freedom of contract, right of ownership, and lastly settlement in conformity with the law on disputes concerning investments in general and foreign investments in particular). In the broad sense, a "good system of government" implied respect for all civil and political rights, as well as all economic and social rights, even though the term "rights" was rarely used in that context.

52. As he saw it, the most important point to be noted was that, under the influence of that notion, the conditions for granting aid to developing countries were altering: the donor countries were now insisting on a reduction of military budgets, on compliance with the requirements connected with the validity of the system of government and on the implementation of economic and social rights. That development might even threaten undue interference by donors in the internal affairs of a country.

53. The competent bodies in the matter of development were also now referring to expenditure connected with "human rights priorities" and both UNDP and the World Bank were increasingly urging Governments to devote part of their budget to meeting basic needs in respect of food, housing, education, etc., which the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights might term "fundamental economic and social rights". The donor States were also being increasingly insistant on those human rights priorities. At the present time only 8 per cent of all foreign aid was devoted to expenditure on those priorities. The United Nations system as a whole, however, was hardly doing better. It should therefore make a more systematic examination of its own approach in that regard.

54. Those same development organizations were now also unanimous in advocating a reduction of military expenditure, whereas 10 years before the Commission on Human Rights had encountered strong resistance in that connection. Today, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were gathering on their own initiative and by their own means data relating to the military expenditure of States. It was quite possible that an understanding might be reached on a definition of "excessive military expenditure".

55. The Human Development Report, 1991 produced by UNDP proposed the formulation of a composite indicator for human development based on economic and social indicators but containing also, for the first time that year, a human freedom indicator. To that end, however, the UNDP had taken into account a set of indicators prepared and published in 1985 by a private individual. It had been wrong to do so; UNDP had endorsed that set of indicators without incorporating other indicators which were imperative and without first having made an in-depth examination, thereby attracting strong criticism from all quarters, even within the United Nations system.

56. For its part, the European Community had adopted, even before the previous session of the Committee, an instrument which was acquiring ever-increasing importance, namely the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of the Workers. That Charter had been signed by 11 of the 12 countries of the Community. The United Kingdom had rejected it for all practical purposes, arguing that it was preferable to leave it to each of the States to promote the social dimension of the European single market. At a time when countries in the throes of transition appeared to be attaching less and less importance to economic and social rights and more and more importance to civil and political rights, it was remarkable to see an instrument that ensured economic and social rights as individual rights guaranteed to every individual. For that European Charter, the progress of freedoms of all kinds (of work, of capital) must be accompanied by fundamental social rights. The Charter was thus fully compatible with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; it dealt with the rights of workers (arts. 6-9 of the Covenant), with social protection (art. 10 of the Covenant) and with the rights of children, the elderly and the handicapped. It had even been proposed that the European Community should be empowered to formulate, as needed, binding directives which the domestic courts of States would be entrusted with enforcing.

57. Mr. BADAWI pointed out that the UNDP report on human development had come under criticism; more particularly in the developing countries, which had doubts about the usefulness of such a report because they feared that it might be used for political purposes so as to establish a link between assistance and the question of freedoms. In addition, the report had been considered culturally partial because it did not take into account religious and moral issues.

58. At a recent informal UNDP meeting held in New York, some participants had pointed out that there was no historical evidence of a link between freedom and development and that there were many examples to the contrary. The discussion had also focused on the four groups of human development indicators which UNDP proposed to formulate: political participation, the rule of law, freedom of expression and association, and non-discrimination. For each of those groups of indicators, a list of criteria had been established. It appeared that the debate had concluded with each side maintaining its position unchanged. The opponents of free enterprise had stressed that in such a delicate matter progress could only be a lengthy process. For his part, he had doubts on the advisability of such an exercise. Even the most favourable participants had expressed reservations.

59. The CHAIRMAN said that those developments and exchanges of views would have important repercussions on the work of the Committee, which should therefore follow them closely.

60. Mr. SIMMA said that in order to form a fair opinion on the reports on social indicators to which reference had been made, it was necessary to be better informed on the reports themselves. Perhaps the Committee could devote Monday, 9 December to that issue.

61. He then reported on two meetings in which he had participated. The first was the symposium organized in Moscow by the Centre for Human Rights in August 1991 immediately after the attempted putsch, a symposium intended for law-enforcement officers, judges and members of the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who, because of their duties, were called upon to implement the instruments relating to human rights. Obviously, the Soviet participants had had other things on their mind at the time and his statement on the methods of work of the Committee had evoked little reaction from them.

62. He had also participated in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights. He would refer to that matter at greater length on Tuesday, 10 December, but wished to state forthwith that the Committee's contribution to the second session of the Preparatory Committee could consist of showing how its work could be rationalized and made more effective. The Committee could perhaps proceed immediately to set up an open-ended sessional working group, which would submit a few suggestions when the Committee examined that question during the third week of its session.

63. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had just published a voluminous report comprising official documents, general comments, the reports submitted by States and the summary records relating to the consideration of those reports. That would make it easier for scholars and observers to follow the work of that Committee. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights might perhaps consider doing likewise.

64. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, although the question of the preparatory activities relating to the World Conference on Human Rights (agenda item 9) would be examined on Tuesday, 10 December, it would be useful to set up at the next meeting a sessional working group of five members which would meet informally and might not only examine questions relating to the preparation of the World Conference but also formulate proposals and suggest innovations which the Committee might wish to adopt in the concluding chapter of its report.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.